

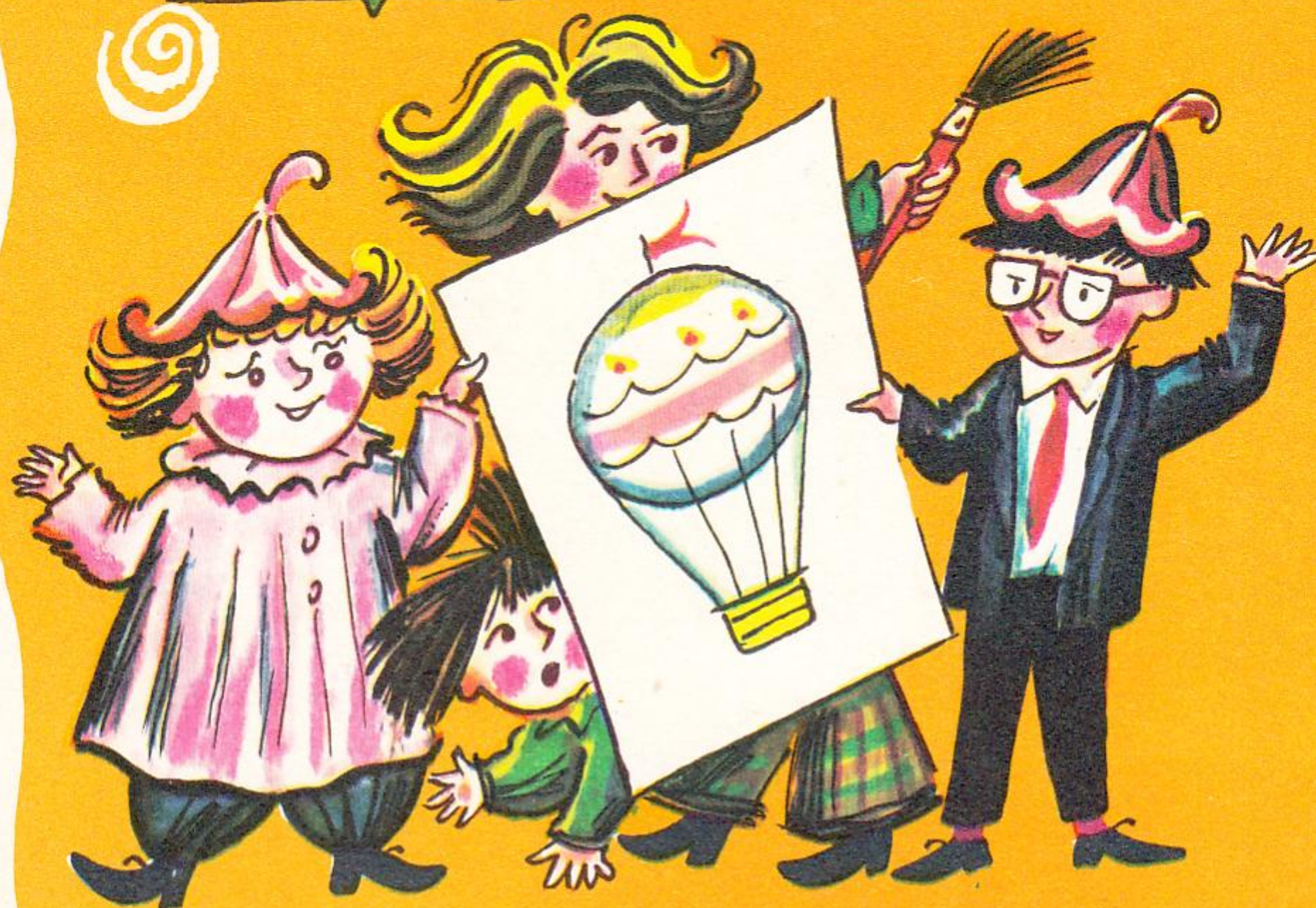
DUNNO'S ADVENTURES


6

Nikolai NOSOV



HOW DOONO Made a Balloon



 RADUGA PUBLISHERS



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HOW DOONO MADE A BALLOON

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RADUGA PUBLISHERS
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Doono, who was a great reader, had read a lot of travel books. Often of an evening he would tell his friends about what he had read. The Mites loved to listen to his stories. They liked to hear about countries they had never seen, but they liked even better to hear stories about famous travellers, for the most extraordinary things always happen to travellers.

After listening to a number of such stories, the Mites decided to go on a long journey themselves. Some of them suggested taking a trip on foot, others suggested setting off down the river in boats.

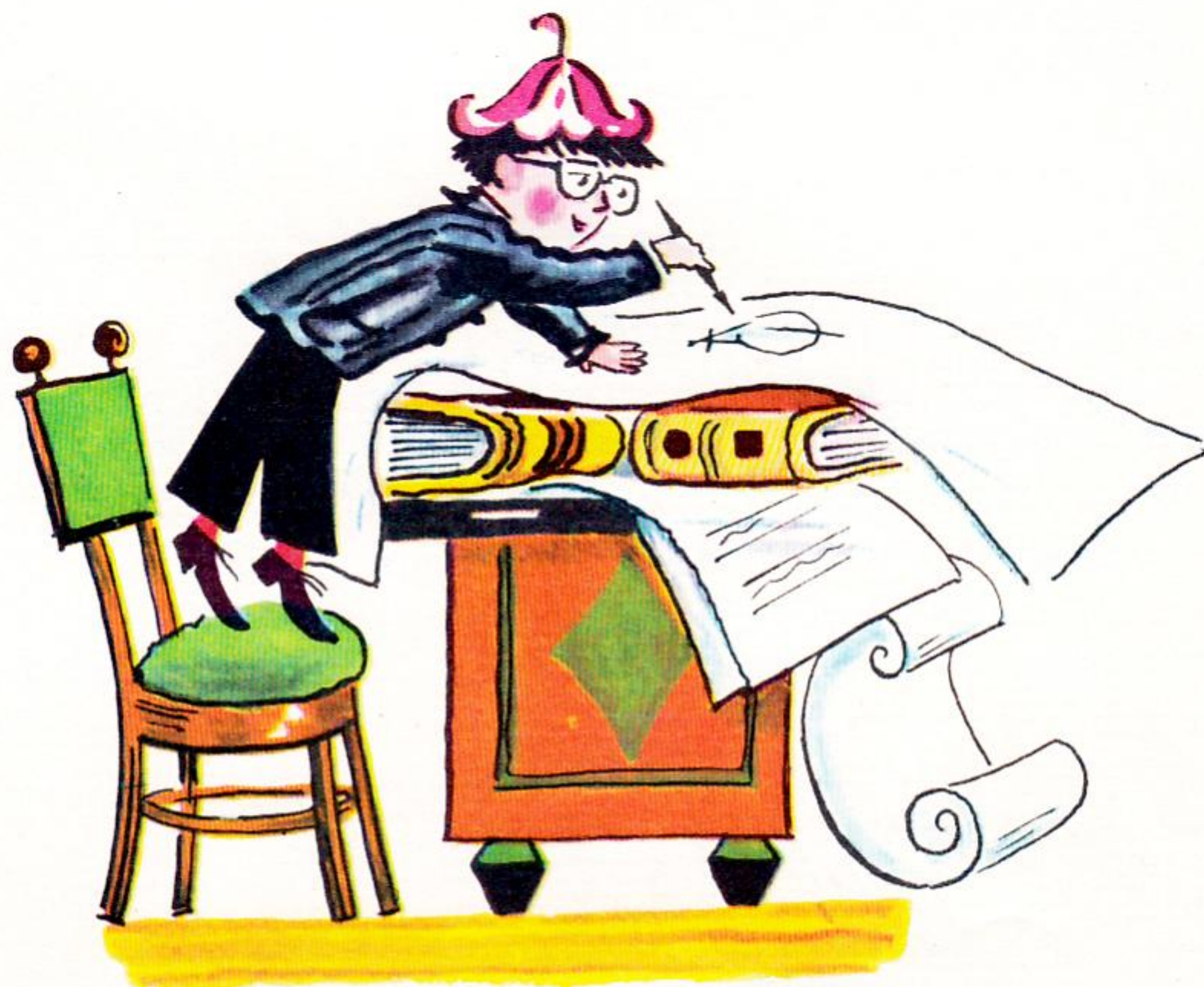
But Doono said:

“Let’s make a balloon and sail up in the air.”

They were all delighted with this suggestion. None of them had ever been up in the air, and they were sure it must be delightful. Of course, they had no idea how to make a balloon, but Doono said he would think it all out and tell them what they must do.

And so he began to think. He thought for three days and three nights, and in the end decided to make the balloon out of rubber. The Mites had rubber. There were many plants that resembled rubber plants growing in their town. They made little slits in the stems and gathered the sap that flowed out. Gradually the sap thickened and turned into rubber, out of which they made rubber balls and galoshes.

As soon as Doono decided to make the balloon out of rubber, he sent the Mites to gather sap and pour it into a big barrel he had got ready for the purpose. On the way to the rubber-trees Dunno met his friend Gunky skipping with two little girl-Mites.





"If you only knew what we were going to do, Gunky," said Dunno, "you'd die of envy!"

"I would not!" retorted Gunky. "I have no intention of dying."

"You would, you would!" sang Dunno. "If you only knew!"

"Well, what is it?" asked Gunky.

"We're going to make a balloon and sail up in the air!"





Gunky went green with envy. He wanted to boast of something himself, and so he said:

"Phooh, a balloon! What do I want with a balloon when I've got two girl-Mites to play with."

"Who are they?" asked Dunno.

"These," said Gunky pointing to his playmates. "That one is called Pee-Wee and the other Tinkle."

Pee-Wee and Tinkle darted suspicious glances at Dunno. Dunno glared at them.

"So that's how it is!" he said to Gunky. "I thought you were my friend."



"I am," said Gunky. "And theirs, too. Can't I be friends with all of you?"

"No, you can't," said Dunno. "If you're a friend of girl-Mites, you're a girl-Mite yourself. Stop playing with them this very minute."

"Why should I?"

"Stop playing with them, I say, or you'll never play with *me* again."



"As if I cared!" said Gunky.

"And I'll give it to your Pee-Wee and Tinkle!"

Dunno clenched his fists and made for the girl-Mites. Gunky leaped in front of him and struck him in the jaw. They began to fight, and Pee-Wee and Tinkle were so frightened they ran away.

"So you gave me a sock in the jaw just on account of those



girls?" said Dunno, aiming a blow at Gunky's nose.

"Why did you have to say such nasty things about them?" said Gunky, swinging his fists.

"Aren't you a hero!" said Dunno, and he struck his friend on the top of the head with such force that Gunky was almost knocked down. As soon as he recovered he took to his heels.

"It's all off between you and me! I won't play with you any more!" Dunno cried after him.

"Don't!" called back Gunky. "You'll be the first to come and make it up."

"No, I won't. We're going to sail away in a balloon!"

"Sail from the roof to the ground!"

"It's you who'll sail from the roof to the ground!" shouted Dunno, and he went off to gather sap.

When the barrel was filled to the top, Doono stirred it well and told Twistum to bring the pump he used for pumping air into motor tyres. Doono fastened a long rubber hose to the pump, smeared rubber sap on the open end of the hose and told Twistum to begin pumping slowly. As Twistum pumped, the sap blew up like a soap bubble. Doono kept smearing this bubble with rubber sap on all sides and Twistum kept working the pump and little by little the bubble turned into a balloon. It



got so big that Doono was unable to smear it on all sides, and so he told the other Mites to take brushes and help him. They all got busy. Everybody but Dunno found work to do. He just walked round and round the balloon at a safe distance, whistling a tune and muttering to himself from time to time:

"It'll burst for sure ... any minute now it'll go bang."

But it did not burst, it just grew bigger every minute. Soon it was so big that the Mites had to climb a hazel bush that was growing in the yard to smear the top and the sides.

They worked for two days, until the balloon was as big as a house. Then Doono tied up the opening with a cord to keep the air from leaking out, and said:

"We'll leave it here to dry while we do another job."

He tied the balloon to the hazel bush so that the wind wouldn't carry it away, and then divided the Mites into two groups. He sent one of them to gather silkworm cocoons and make a big silk net, and he sent the other to make a big basket out of birch-bark.



While Doono and his friends were busy at their tasks, the rest of the Mites in Flower Town came to look at the balloon tied to the bush. Each of them wanted to touch it, and some even tried to lift it up.

"It's very light," they said. "You can lift it with one hand."

"Yes, it's light, but I'm afraid it'll never rise into the air," said a Mite named Sinker.

"Why not?" asked the others.

"If it was light enough it would rise now, and not lie here on the ground," said Sinker. "It's too heavy to be light."

The Mites thought this over.

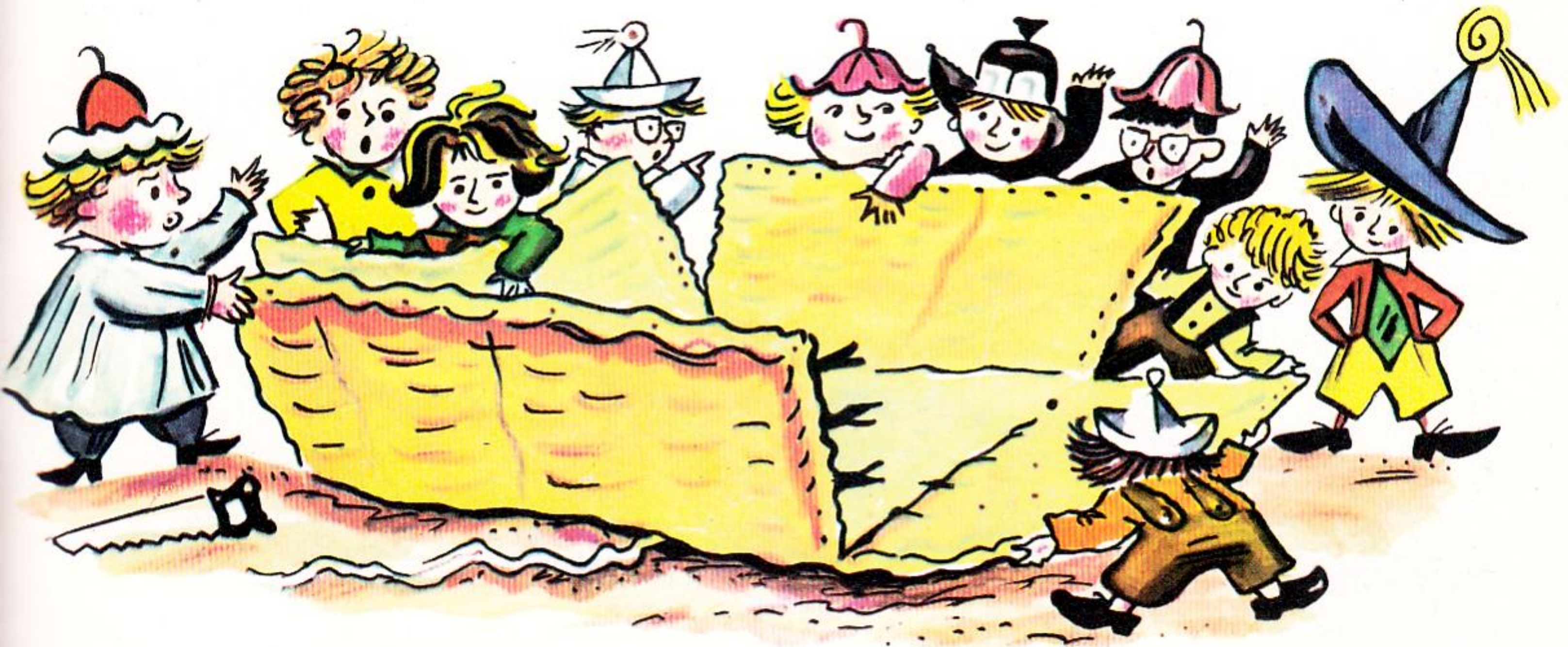
"Hm, true enough," they said. "It's too heavy to be light. It would sail away if it weren't."

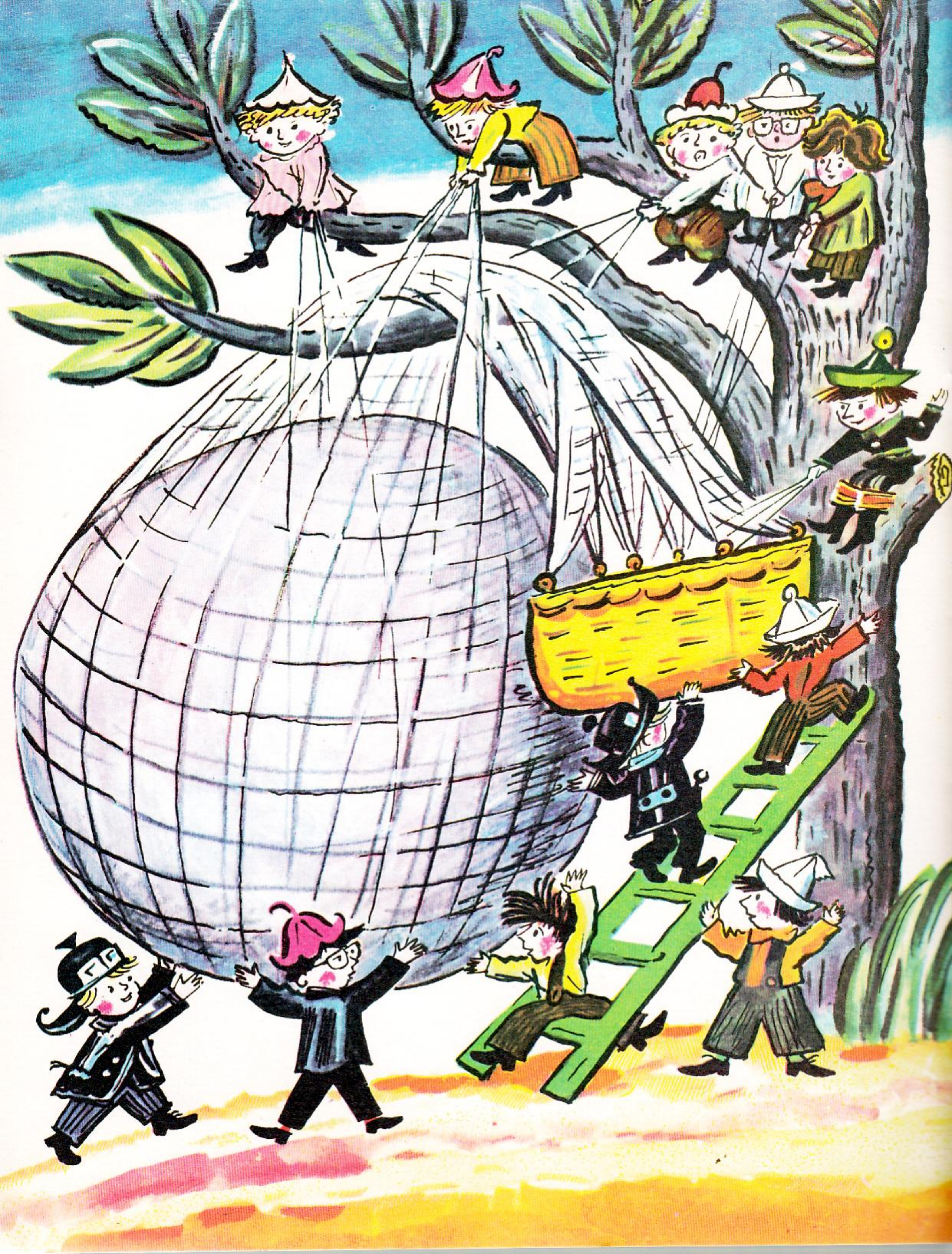
They began to question Doono, but he just said:

"Wait a while. Soon everything will be clear."

This made them doubt more than ever, and Sinker went about town spreading unpleasant rumours.

"What could possibly make that balloon rise?" he said.





"Nothing could. Birds fly because they have wings, but nothing can make that balloon fly. It can only fall."

In a very short time nobody had any faith in the balloon. They made fun of it. They would come to Doono's house and gaze over the fence and say:

"Look, look! It's flying! Ha, ha, ha!"

But Doono paid no attention to their jeers. When the silk net was ready, he told them to throw it over the balloon.

"Look!" cried the Mites standing at the fence. "They've caught the balloon in a net! They're afraid it will fly away! Ha, ha, ha!"

Doono told his helpers to get hold of the rope on the balloon and tie it to a branch of the hazel bush, so they could pull it up off the ground. Swifty and Twistum did this, then climbed the bush with the rope in their hands and began to pull. This made the onlookers laugh harder than ever.

"Ha, ha, ha! A fine sort of balloon that has to be pulled up on a rope!"

"Here's how!" said Sinker. "They'll sit astride the balloon and pull on the rope to make it go up."

When the balloon was lifted off the ground, the four corners of the net hung down, and Doono told his helpers to tie them





to the birch-bark basket. The basket was square and had benches round all four sides. Each bench held four Mites.

When they had tied the net to the four corners of the basket Doono said the balloon was ready. Swifty supposed they could climb in and sail away, but Doono said they had to make each of the Mites a parachute first.

"What for?" asked Dunno.

"What if the balloon should burst? You'd have to jump with parachutes."

The next day was spent in making parachutes. Doono told them how to make them out of dandelions, and each of the travellers made his own.

The townsfolk saw the balloon dangling motionless from the hazel bush, and they said to one another:

"It will keep on hanging there until it bursts. Nobody will go anywhere in that balloon."





“Why don’t you set out?” they shouted over the fence.
“Hurry up, before it bursts!”

“Don’t worry,” said Doono. “We are setting out tomorrow, at eight o’clock in the morning.”

Most of them laughed, but there were a few who thought the balloon might rise after all.

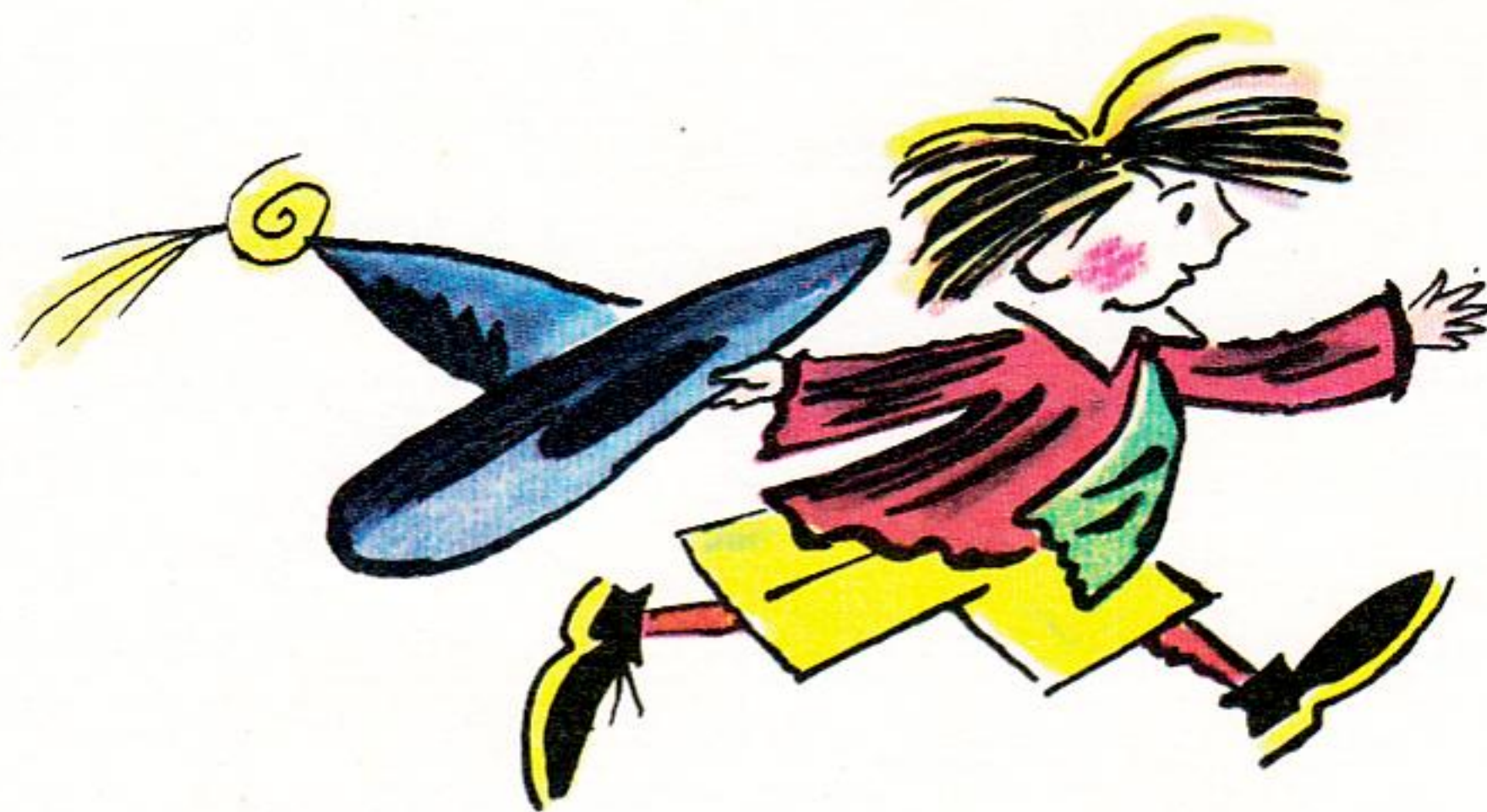
“What if it really should?” they said. “We must be sure to come here in the morning and see.”



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You can read about more adventures of Dunno and his friends
from Flower Town in
PREPARATIONS FOR THE ASCENT
and
UP IN THE AIR IN A BALLOON.